

**PUBLIC INFORMATION**

***Primary Agency:*** Department of Safety – Bureau of Emergency Management (BEM)

***Support Agencies:*** Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food  
Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)  
Governor’s Office  
Office of Energy and Planning

***I. Introduction***

***A. Purpose***

The purpose of Public Information is to establish uniform policies for the effective development, coordination, and dissemination of information to the public in the event of a disaster. The ESF also describes the means, organization, and process by which a jurisdiction provides timely, accurate, and useful information and instructions to area residents throughout an emergency.

***B. Scope***

Emergency public information actions before, during, and following any emergency will be determined by the severity of the emergency as declared by involved jurisdictions, state agencies, or as perceived by the public. A significant emergency public information response will involve many state, municipal, and private sector agencies. Public Information identifies those agencies and their responsibilities.

***II. Situation***

***A. Emergency/Disaster Conditions and Hazards***

1. An emergency or disaster may cause extensive damage to life and property. Communications and transportation access will likely be disrupted or destroyed. Preservation of life and property may hinge on instructions and directions given by authorized officials.
2. Accurate and expedited dissemination of information is critical, particularly when a terrorist incident has occurred. In the event of a terrorist attack, the public and the media must be provided with accurate and timely information on emergency operations. Establishing and

maintaining an effective rumor control mechanism will help clarify emergency information for the public. Initial interaction with the media is likely to be implemented by an information officer, as directed by the Incident Commander (IC) in the field.

3. A terrorist attack would quickly result in Federal agencies, particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), assuming command of the incident. To facilitate the release of information, the FBI may elect to establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) composed of representatives from Federal, State, and local authorities for the purpose of managing the dissemination of information to the public, media, and businesses potentially affected by the incident. An act of terrorism may cause widespread panic, and ongoing communication of accurate and up-to-date information will help calm fears and limit collateral effects of the attack.

4. ***Means of Dissemination***

The following is a list of the means available to the state for transmitting / disseminating emergency public information messages:

- a. Emergency Alert System (EAS)
- b. Television
- c. Radio
- d. Cable TV not participating in EAS
- e. Newspaper
- f. Specially printed materials
- g. TDD/TTY
- h. Rumor Control / Citizen Information Center
- i. Hot Lines
- j. In addition to these resources, back-up means can also be utilized including vehicle-mounted public address system, and door-to-door notifications.
- k. Refer to the Public Information Officer standard operating procedure/guide (SOP/SOG) for operational information including hours of operation, circulation, languages, points of contact, and notification procedures.

1. Internet

5. ***Audience***

- a. The target audience for emergency public information messages consists of people directly affected by the emergency. First priority should be given to providing information needed immediately for the protection of life and property, such as evacuation routes and sources of emergency assistance. But more general information regarding what is going on and what is being done to remedy the situation also needs to be provided to the public via the news media. Major disasters and terrorist events are automatically major news stories and arrangements must be made to accommodate extensive media coverage.
- b. **Special Needs Groups**
  - 1) Hearing Impaired
  - 2) Visually Impaired
  - 3) Language
    - a) Approximately 1.6 percent of the State's population is Spanish speaking, with 0.1 percent of the total population who speak no English at all. One New Hampshire radio station, WNNW in Salem, broadcasts in Spanish.
    - b) Approximately 5.5 percent speaks other Indo-European languages.
    - c) Approximately 0.9 percent speaks Asian or Pacific Island languages.
    - d) Approximately 0.3 percent speaks other languages.
- c. **Physical Restrictions**
  - 1) Custodial institutions – schools, nursing homes, hospitals, correctional facility.
  - 2) Tourists unfamiliar with the area and its hazards.

d. **Preparedness**

The BEM Public Information Officer (PIO) is responsible for managing ongoing public preparedness campaigns including quarterly preparedness newsletters and other public information efforts.

**B. Planning Assumptions**

1. The level of preparedness will affect the public's perception of the emergency or disaster. Tourists will feel particularly vulnerable if they are unaware of the hazards or planned responses of the area.
2. The event will require responding agencies to provide instructions and information to the public about the incident and actions people should take to save and protect lives, property, economy, and the environment. Responding agencies should also expect to provide information to reduce public concerns about the incident and response activities.
3. Local media will be more willing than out-of-state media to provide specific emergency public information to local residents.
4. Some events, or even forecast events, can bring many reporters, photographers, and camera crews to an area; this will create heavy demands on the emergency public information organization. A media center must be set up to accommodate a large media influx. All emergency workers should be instructed to refer media inquiries to public information staff.
5. Public and media will desire more information and will call to get it. A rumor control or public inquiry call center should be set up as early in the operation as possible.

**III. Concept of Operations**

**A. General**

1. State agencies are responsible for providing the public with information about the incident, intermediate protective actions designed to further save lives, protect property, the economy, and the environment, and long-term recovery actions to restore the affected community, as nearly as possible, to its pre-incident condition.

2. This section of the ESF provides general information on how emergency public information is to be disseminated to the public.

***B. Information Support Structure***

***1. State Information Support Structure***

- a. The Department of Safety – Bureau of Emergency Management (BEM), PIO will coordinate the management of the State's emergency public information response through all phases of disaster.
- b. State emergency public information will be coordinated through the State's Emergency Operations Center (EOC). If a JIC is established, State-level emergency public information also will be provided to the media and the public through that facility. The State will assist with locating and managing the operation of such a center.
- c. State agencies with specific ESFs or other response roles, for example in a chemical or radiological emergency, will provide staff support for the State's emergency public information efforts.

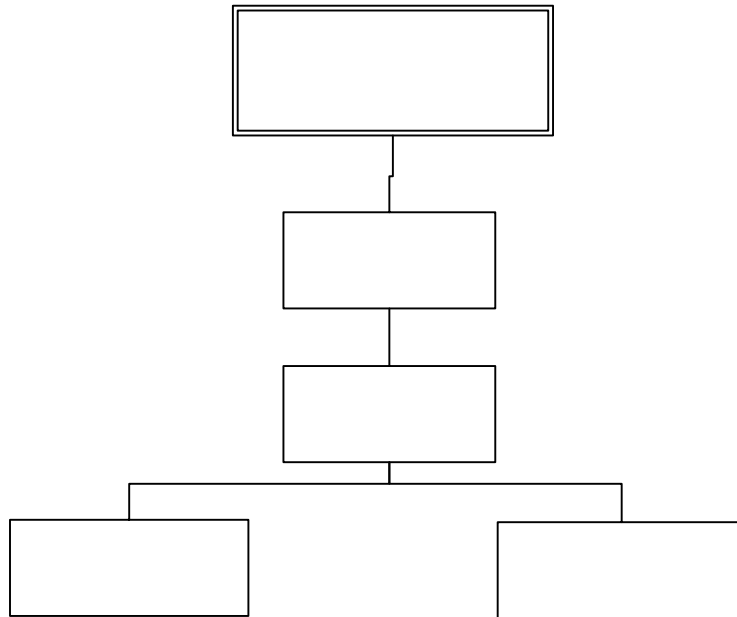
***2. Federal Information Support Structure***

- a. The State will coordinate with Federal agencies to provide Federal-level information to the public following a natural or technological emergency or disaster, as deemed necessary.
- b. The Federal government will assist with locating and managing the operations of a JIC, if requested.

***C. Organization***

1. Public Information will be composed of a Coordinator and assistants as needed. Once the ESF is operational at the EOC it shall function under the direction and control of the EOC Operations Officer.
2. The staffing pattern and level will be dependent upon the severity of the emergency.
3. The functional organization structure of Public Information is shown in ***Figure 14-1, Functional Organization of Public Information.***
4. ***Public Information Coordinator***

The Public Information Officer directs the work of Public Information at the direction of the EOC Operations Officer. The Public Information Coordinator oversees the information flow to the public via the media.



*Figure 14-1, Functional Organization of Public Information*

5. *Interagency Coordination*

Upon notification of an emergency requiring the activation of the Emergency Operations Center or other significant state response, the BEM PIO will brief and consult with other agency PIOs or representatives and the BEM Director to handle initial media inquiries and to begin developing a public information response appropriate to the situation. That response may involve:

- a. **Other Emergency Support Functions (ESFs)**
- b. **State Agencies**
- c. **Private sector organizations**
- d. **Federal Agencies**

6. *Specialized Teams/Units*

- a. A public information response may include the activation of the Rumor Control Unit. Personnel from the Bureau of Emergency Communications (E-911), BEM or other agencies will likely staff the Unit. The E-911 supervisor on duty must be notified of the activation or any emergency call center and its purpose so that its operations can be coordinated with E-911.
- b. RERP identifies a public information team consisting of a PIO and Media Assistant and Rumor Control Supervisor and Rumor Control Operators located in the EOC. A Media Representative and Assistant are also located in the Emergency Operations Facilities (EOF) located in Newington, N.H., for Seabrook Station and Brattleboro, Vt., for Vermont Yankee.

**7. Operational Facilities/Sites**

- a. **Media Center:** A Media Center may be activated for any major or long term emergency response operation. The Media Center should be located at a site that has convenient access for media personnel and equipment and has appropriate working facilities. The media center should be staffed by a PIO, security officer and other appropriate personnel and have secure communication links to the EOC, JIC and other facilities.
- b. **Joint Information Center:** A JIC may be established to coordinate media activities during multi-agency operations. In a terrorist event it is likely that the FBI will establish and manage a JIC, with state agency PIOs providing support.

**D. Notification and Activation**

- 1. In response to an event that would require the activation of the State EOC, the BEM Director or the designated Operations Officer would initiate notification. During off-duty hours, to include weekends and holidays, the notification would normally be initiated by the New Hampshire State Police to the BEM Duty Officer. The Duty Officer would then begin notification by established procedures.
- 2. Public Information may be activated at the request of an appropriate agency through the BEM when an emergency condition exists and requires the support of Public Information.
- 3. Upon activation the Public Information representative will implement existing operating procedures and support agency notifications as outlined in existing protocols.

4. Deployment of personnel and resources will take place within the framework of the EOC direction and control decision-making process.

***E. Actions***

***1. Preparedness***

- a. BEM PIO will implement a comprehensive multi-media public information program which includes:
  - 1) Public service announcements and scheduled announcements.
  - 2) Maintaining the EAS.
  - 3) Preparation and distribution of a quarterly newsletter to local and State emergency management personnel, the public and the media focusing on preparedness.
  - 4) An on-going public information campaign focusing on family and personal preparedness through a coordinated print and broadcast campaign and public speaking engagement by the State's PIOs.
- b. Identify and train appropriate staff to implement the public information responsibilities outlined in Public Information.
- c. Arrange production of written and graphic materials, if needed.
- d. Participate in a coordinated program to educate the public about hazards caused by emergencies or disasters, and the actions people may be asked to take to protect themselves, their property, and the environment.

***2. Response***

- c. Publicize, through the media, response activities that directly benefit affected communities. Response activities may include:
  - 1) Location of shelters and feeding stations.
  - 2) Location of comfort stations.
  - 3) Boil water orders.
  - 4) Facility and road closure information.



- 5) School and office building closing information.
- 6) Environmental hazards.
- 7) Product recalls.
- 8) Mass vaccinations.
  
- d. Respond to all hazards and to hazard-specific incidents involving releases from the Seabrook Station, and Vermont Yankee nuclear power plants in accordance with emergency response plans and procedures for each site and the New Hampshire Radiological Emergency Response Plan (RERP).
- e. Establish and maintain contact with the media.
- f. Provide information and any instructions, as cleared by the BEM Director.
- g. Monitor media reports and telephone inquiries for accuracy and respond as appropriate to correct rumors.
- h. Augment public inquiry and/or media relations' staffs, if needed.
- i. Set up any additional facilities for emergency public information operations (e.g., separate telephone bank or media center) with support from the Communications Coordinator.
- j. Ensure distribution of printed materials to broadcast media, to pre-selected locations, to volunteer groups or other response and recovery personnel that may go into residential area, and /or via newspaper.
- k. Compile chronology of media releases and events.
- l. Assist with incident-level public information duties, as needed.

3. ***Recovery***

- a. Working in consultation with the BEM Director or designee, respond to reporter inquiries for damage assessment statistics and estimates.
- b. In coordination with FEMA, publicize the status of disaster declarations, types of assistance available to disaster victims, and recovery center locations.

- c. Depending on the severity of the incident, it is possible that Public Information will be required to staff a position at FEMA's Disaster Field Office (DFO).
- d. Refer to the State Mitigation Plan for additional information relating to recovery operations.

4. ***Mitigation***

- a. Refer to the State Mitigation Plan for additional information relating to recovery operations.
- b. Public Information will publicize the State's significant accomplishments toward mitigation.

**IV. Roles and Responsibilities**

A. **Primary Agency - Department of Safety – Emergency Management (BEM)**

- 1. The BEM PIO serves as the Coordinator for Public Information and is responsible for developing and distributing all approved media information to the EAS, news media, rumor control, and/or any other organizations deemed necessary to receive the news advisories.
- 2. The PIO serves as the state EOC representative for news and advisory issues.
- 3. Establish Public Information as a means to provide instructions and information to the public about a natural or manmade disaster. Public Information will provide information to the public, media, and appropriate State elected officials, legislators and members of Congress who represent areas affected by the emergency or disaster. This will be done in conjunction with the Governor's Office.
- 4. Coordinate the management of the State's emergency public information response through all phases of an emergency or disaster.
- 5. Ensure coordination of information and press briefings with Governor's Office.
- 6. Provide information on the emergency or disaster, its impact on the state, State response actions, and agency support being provided to local jurisdictions and state response agencies. This will be done in cooperation and collaboration with the Governor's Office.

7. Provide information on recovery programs designed to return, if possible, to its pre-incident condition. This will be done in cooperation and collaboration with the Governor's Office.
8. Ensure that an Incident Action Plan is developed for each operational period and that it is coordinated with the EOC Operations Officer and Information and Planning.
9. Collect and maintain the following ESF status information and coordinate with Information and Planning to ensure inclusion into the Situation Report (SITREP):
  - a. **Media releases issued.**
  - b. **Schedule of press conferences and releases.**
  - c. **Unmet needs.**
  - d. **Major Public Information issues/activities.**
  - e. **Staffing and resource shortfalls.**
10. In the event the Public Information Coordinator needs additional assistance; the Coordinator will establish and manage a Media Support Unit and a Rumor Control Unit. The Units will be staffed by the support agencies identified below.

***B. Support Agencies***

1. ***General***
  - a. Provide subject matter experts for media interviews and press conferences, as requested and appropriate.
  - b. Provide departmental public information and public education support, as requested, to the State EOC Public Information Officer during an emergency or disaster.
  - c. Staff the Media Support Unit and Rumor Control Unit.
2. ***Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food***

Provide Public Information Officer to assist with Public Information operations, as needed.
3. ***Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)***
  - a. Provide a PIO to assist with Public Information operations, as needed.

- b. Prepare public health announcements and coordinate with the PIO for the widest dissemination possible.
- c. Coordinate the release of personal protective actions and public education materials, as needed.

4. ***Governor's Office***

Coordinate the release of public information statements with the Public Information Coordinator.

**C. Resource Agencies**

1. ***General***

- a. Provide subject matter experts for media interviews and press conferences, as requested and appropriate.
- b. Provide departmental public information and public education support, as requested, to the State EOC PIO during an emergency or disaster.

**V. References**

**A. Plans**

- 1. The Federal Response Plan, April 1999
- 2. Small Pox Response Plan – Crisis Communication (Section 9), December 2002.
- 3. Radiological Emergency Response Plan (RERP)

**B. Standard Operating Procedures/Guides (SOPs/SOGs)**

- 1. Public Information Alert and Notification SOG
- 2. Public Information Activation and Deactivation SOG
- 3. Public Information Position Checklists
- 4. Emergency Alert System SOP
- 5. Rumor Control

**VI. Attachments**

**A. Forms**

1. Chronological Event Log
2. Incident Report
3. Status Report
4. Message Form
5. BEM Emergency Shift Change
6. State Agency Emergency Shift Schedule
7. Federal / State Point of Contact Worksheet

NOTE: All forms are bound separately and are located in the State EOC.